

## Book Summary

*A Passage to India* was divided by E. M. Forster into three parts. The first part, "Mosque," begins with what is essentially a description of the city of Chandrapore. The physical separation of the city into sections, plus the separation of earth and sky, are indicative of a separation of deeper significance that exists between the Indian and English sectors.

This novel deals with human relationships, and the theme that determines its plot line is introduced in this section: "Is it possible for the Indian and the Englishman to be friends?" To show both sides of this question, the reader is first introduced to Dr. Aziz and his friends. Aziz is a Moslem doctor who practices at the government hospital in Chandrapore under the supervision of Major Callendar. Among Aziz's friends are Hamidullah, an Indian barrister who has lived in England; Nawab Bahadur, an influential landowner; and Mahmoud Ali. In the opening chapters these men are shown discussing the English officials who govern under the British Raj in India.

Among the English faction, who also discuss the Anglo-Indian relationship, are Mr. Turton, the Collector; Major Callendar, the English doctor; Mr. McBryde, the police magistrate; and Ronny Heaslop, the city magistrate and the latest official to assume duties in Chandrapore.

Between these groups, or outside them, are Cyril Fielding, the English principal of the government school, whose allegiance belongs to neither group; Mrs. Moore, mother of Ronny Heaslop, who has come to India as chaperone to Miss Adela Quested, Ronny's intended fiancée; Professor Godbole, a Hindu who is separated from the Moslems by his religion and\* from the English by his religion and nationality; and the English missionaries, Mr. Graysford and Mr. Sorley, who share none of the arrogance of English officialdom as they attempt to convert the Indians to Christianity.

The story opens with Aziz's arrival at Hamidullah's house, where he is to spend a social evening with his friends. Their conversation centers upon the indignities that the Indian must suffer at the hands of the English officials and their wives. Young Ronny Heaslop, whom they dub the "red-nosed boy," is a particular object of ridicule.

Aziz is summoned to the house of his superior, Major Callendar. He is late in arriving and when he arrives, he finds the major gone. Two English women preempt his tonga and on the walk back to his house he encounters Mrs. Moore at the mosque. The old lady endears herself to Aziz by her innate understanding of him and of Moslem custom; he calls her an Oriental.

Later, at the English club, Adela Quested expresses her desire to see the "real India" and is advised by a passerby to "try seeing Indians." To humor her Mr. Turton offers to give a "Bridge Party," a garden party ostensibly designed to bridge the distance between the English and the Indian, and to give Adela and Mrs. Moore the opportunity to meet socially some of the upper-class Indians.

At Mrs. Moore's cottage that night Ronny and his mother discuss her encounter with Aziz at the mosque. Ronny shows his unmistakable prejudice and Mrs. Moore is appalled at his inhumane attitude. On her way to bed, she exhibits a sympathetic response to a wasp, one of the least of India's creatures.

On the outskirts of the town, Mr. Sorley, the younger and more liberal of the two English missionaries, while willing to accept that there may well be a heaven for mammals, cannot bring himself to admit the lowly wasp.

The garden party given by the Turtons only serves to show more clearly the division of peoples, as each group keeps to itself. Cyril Fielding, who mingles freely with the Indians, is impressed by the friendliness of Mrs. Moore and Adela and invites them to tea at his home. They are also invited for a Thursday morning visit — which never materializes — to the home of the Bhattacharya's, a Hindu couple.

That evening, in a discussion with Ronny, Mrs. Moore is again appalled by her son, and quotes to him from the Bible, reminding him that God is love and expects man to love his neighbor (though she herself has found Him less satisfying in India than ever before). Ronny humors her, reminding himself that she is old.

At tea at Fielding's house, Mrs. Moore and Adela visit pleasantly with Aziz and Professor Godbole, enigmatic Hindu associate of Mr. Fielding. The kindness of Mrs. Moore and Adela Quested prompts Aziz to invite them on an outing to the Marabar Caves, which they accept. Ronny Heaslop arrives at Fielding's cottage to take his mother and Adela to a game of polo; his discourtesy to Aziz and his arrogant demeanor toward all Indians causes Adela and Ronny to quarrel, and Adela tells Ronny she cannot marry him.

Later the young people go for a ride with Nawab Bahadur, and when the automobile is involved in an accident with an unidentified animal on a back road, they are drawn together once more and announce their engagement. Mrs. Moore accepts the news calmly, but when told of the accident she murmurs, "A ghost!"

Aziz, pleased with the friendship shown him by Cyril Fielding, shows the English professor a picture of his dead wife, a courtesy equal to inviting Fielding behind the purdah, the highest honor an Indian can give.

The next section, "Caves," begins with a detailed description of the Marabar Caves, the peculiar hollow caverns within the equally curious Marabar Hills that rise from an otherwise flat area outside the city of Chandrapore.

It is to these caves that Aziz has planned an elaborate trip for Mrs. Moore and Adela Quested. He has also included Fielding and Godbole in the invitation. Unfortunately, Fielding and Godbole miss the train and Aziz is left in full charge of the expedition, which begins with a train ride and ends with an elephant ride to the immediate vicinity of

the caves. In the first cave Mrs. Moore is terrified by an echo and the press of the crowd and declines to go farther.

Aziz, a guide, and Adela go on alone. Adela, pondering her engagement to Ronny, unwisely asks Aziz if he has more than one wife. The excitable little Indian, upset by her queries, dashes into a cave to recover his composure. Adela wanders aimlessly into another cave and is supposedly assaulted by someone there. She rushes down the side of the hill, where she meets Nancy Derek, an English companion to a maharani, who has brought Fielding to the caves. Nancy returns the overwrought Adela to Chandrapore.

In the meantime Aziz, knowing nothing of what has happened to Adela, entertains his other friends and returns with them by train. At the station he is met by Mr. Haq, the police inspector, who arrests him for assaulting Miss Quested.

Fielding alienates himself from the English by siding with Aziz. The English rally around Adela and press for a quick conviction. Mrs. Moore, now sunk into a state of apathy, refuses to admit that Aziz may be guilty but also refuses to testify in his behalf in court; Ronny arranges passage for her to England. On the way she dies; her name, however, becomes for a time a legend to the natives of Chandrapore.

At the trial, Adela Quested, who has been in a state of shock since the incident at the caves, suddenly finds her mind clear again and exonerates Aziz. Her withdrawal of the charge against Aziz causes her to be ostracized by the English. Fielding reluctantly offers her the use of his cottage while he is absent on official business, and Ronny eventually breaks their engagement. Disillusioned by her experience in India, Adela returns to England; and Fielding persuades Aziz to drop a damage suit against her.

Two years later the setting of the novel shifts to the Hindu state of Mau in a section entitled "Temple." Following the trial, Fielding had returned to England, married, and was then sent on a tour of central India to inspect government schools. Godbole has become the Minister of Education at Mau, and through his influence, Aziz has become personal physician to the Rajah of Mau.

The opening chapter of this section describes a Hindu ceremony honoring the birth of the god Krishna. Professor Godbole directs the temple choir and, in an ecstasy of religious fervor, dances his joy. While in this almost trancelike state he remembers Mrs. Moore and a wasp, associating them as he contemplates the love of God. The biblical statement "God is Love," with which Mrs. Moore had exhorted her son, is repeated in the Hindu ceremony, although through an error in its printing it becomes "God si Love."

Aziz is annoyed when he discovers that Fielding is visiting Mau in line with his official duties. He has become thoroughly disillusioned with the British and even with Fielding; when he learned that Fielding had married in England, he concluded that the wife was Adela Quested and henceforth refused to read any of Fielding's letters. Aziz has married again and has his children with him. Although he does not embrace Hinduism,

he is tolerant of their festivals and is finding peace and contentment away from British domination. He has, however, let his practice of medicine degenerate until he is little more than a glorified medicine man.

When Aziz meets Fielding again, he learns that Stella Moore, not Adela Quested, is Fielding's wife. Stella and her brother Ralph have accompanied Fielding to India. Aziz forms a special attachment for Ralph, whose bee stings he treats, because Ralph shows many of the traits of his mother, Mrs. Moore.

The Hindu festival continues after the celebration of the birth of the god. Fielding and Stella go out in a boat to better observe the ceremony, as do Aziz and Ralph in another boat. In the storm the boats collide with each other and capsize. In the general confusion that follows, the ceremony comes to an end and the English return to the guest house. Aziz has confided to Ralph that the rajah has died, but the announcement of his death is suspended until after the festival.

Hinduism affects both Stella and Ralph, but Fielding cannot understand the effect it has on them, though he is intrigued by it. Aziz believes that Ralph, at least, has an Oriental mind, as Mrs. Moore had.

Although Fielding finds that the school that Professor Godbole was to superintend has been neglected and the building turned into a granary, he does nothing to rectify the situation. The floods, which have kept Fielding in Mau, abate, and he and his party make plans to leave. Before they go, Fielding and Aziz take a final horseback ride together. Good-naturedly, they argue about the Anglo-Indian problem. Aziz excitedly declares that India must be united and the English driven out. Sensing that this is the end of their association, Aziz and Fielding attempt to pledge eternal friendship in spite of their differences, but the path narrows and their horses are forced apart, signifying that such a friendship is not yet possible.

## **Brighton Rock Symbols, Allegory and Motifs**

### **Rose's memory (motif)**

Rose's uncannily sensitive and accurate memory is her whole reason for becoming involved in the actions of the story: Pinkie, visiting her at Snow's, finds that she remembers Spicer's face very clearly. Later on, throughout his relationship with her, Pinkie is frustrated by the way in which she seems to remember all the things he doesn't want her to and neglect all the things he wants her to.

### **Colleoni's clockwork view of the world (symbol)**

When Pinkie goes to meet him at the Cosmopolitan, Mr. Colleoni outlines a view of the world in which the rough and violent world of gangsters such as Pinkie has its energies redirected into a much cleaner, more prosperous, and more bureaucratic form of organization. One of the symbols he uses to express this vision is that of the many clocks of world times at Greenwich.

### **Vitriol (symbol)**

The bottle of vitriol that Pinkie carries around is perhaps the strongest symbol for his, frankly, vitriolic character: he causes indiscriminate pain and hides this capability within a compact frame. Eventually, the weapon is fated to turn on the hand that uses it, but it is also important to note how Rose does not take note of it; this, in turn, represents her accommodating attitude towards Pinkie himself.

### **The broken-down Morris (symbol)**

**The cheap and broken-down car that Pinkie drives, often stalking people such as Hale in the beginning when he is about to murder him, represents Pinkie's aspiration (given the importance**

## **Brighton Rock Metaphors and Similes**

### **"She had emerged like a mole [from Nelson Place] into the daylight of Snow's restaurant and the Palace Pier" (51) (Simile)**

When Pinkie takes Rose on their first date to Sherry's, he discovers that because of her poor, working-class background, she has never had the opportunity to get a drink and so does not even know any names of drinks when Pinkie offers to buy her one. She has emerged from one world into another and is dazzled by the new.

### **Sex as violence (Simile)**

When Pinkie has sex for the first time with Rose, he feels that it is an even worse sin than the murders he has committed.

### **Mr. Prewitt's wife as the "old mole" (228) (Metaphor)**

When Pinkie visits Mr. Prewitt at his house, he finds the man drunk and ranting about his wife, who is sweeping the cellar below the room where they are sitting. He complains about her appearance and lowliness, calling her an "old mole."

### **"His yellow shaven middle-aged face was deeply lined with legal descriptions" (124) (Metaphor)**

Mr. Prewitt is introduced as an aging lawyer whose work for criminals and the mob has made him insensitive to things such as the insults hurled against him in court for the unscrupulousness of the work he does.

### **"It [vitriol] hissed like steam" (50) (Simile)**

Pinkie shows Rose the effects of vitriol to scare her; Greene uses a simile to convey vividly the chemical potency of the acid.

of a car as a status symbol) and, simultaneously, his lowly position.

### **Ida's investigation (allegory)**

Ida harangues Rose and tries to separate her from Pinkie, not so much out of a sense of justice, but rather from a supposedly philanthropic impulse. This makes her whole kindhearted enterprise, prying into the affairs of other people where she is not involved and secularizing religious beliefs, stand as an allegory for the different ways in which progressives try to effect social change.

## **Brighton Rock Irony**

### **Pinkie accusing Rose of being "green" (Dramatic Irony)**

Even though Pinkie is quite young and a virgin just like Rose, he condescends upon her, saying that she is naïve and does not understand love and sex. It is because the two are so similar in this regard that Pinkie is able to feel better about himself by denigrating her; he distances himself from the part of himself that he feels shame for.

### **Colleoni the clean gangster (Situational Irony)**

When Pinkie is brought into the police station for questioning about his assault of Brewer, the investigator explains to him that they prefer Colleoni's breed of gangster: less inclined to violence; more concerned about the preservation of order rather than the accrual of pride.

Colleoni, though a criminal, lives a very rich and comfortable existence, and he does not have to take on the threatening pose of the criminal. He has, as he himself claims, become a businessman.

### **Opposites attract (Situational Irony)**

As Pinkie himself realizes, he and Rose are diametrically opposed characters: He is evil, and she is good. Rose also realizes this, but this only makes her agree with Pinkie in their contradictory romance. Rose's goodness is a goodness more closely related to Pinkie's evil than to Ida's goodness.

### **Pinkie's vitriol (Dramatic Irony)**

**Although Pinkie keeps his vitriol as a last-resort weapon, especially against Rose, and threatens her with it, it is, in the end, he himself who feels the searing burn of the acid. This**

represents the way his own poisonous personality, which he had thought made him a tough criminal, destroys him. **Brighton Rock Imagery**

## **Pinkie's death scene**

When Pinkie is discovered with Rose by Dallow, Ida, and the policeman, he struggles to find a way to fight them without the gun that Rose has just thrown away. He alights upon a final option -- the bottle of vitriol he carries with him -- and, in a sequence portrayed through a cinematic kind of disjointed montage, in which the linkage between cause and effect is rarely clear, Pinkie tries to throw the vitriol but then reels back when the policeman's baton shatters it on him.

## **Pinkie and Rose's sex scene**

We do not actually see any of the bodily movements between Pinkie and Rose as they have sex. Instead, Greene describes the scene through Pinkie's abstract considerations of sin and damnation, the scraps of words exchanged between the two lovers, and the insistent bell-ringing downstairs.

## **Mr. Prewitt drunk**

Pinkie watches in a kind of fascinated horror as Mr. Prewitt, a man who usually seems very knowledgeable and in control of himself, dissolves into a revolting and self-pitying character while drunk on a Sunday. Because of indigestion and a stomach ulcer, Mr. Prewitt's gesticulations are especially exaggerated and grotesque.

## **Pinkie pinching Rose**

Although Pinkie is often described in the abstract terms of his mental tribulations over the fear of damnation, when he is with Rose the description instead zooms into the very concrete and particular action of his pinching parts of her, such as her wrist. This serves as an embodiment in an action of Pinkie's acidic and hurtful personality and the way that Rose's passive and masochistic personality receives it.

## **Brighton Rock Catholic Modernity: Brighton Rock and Wise Blood**

As Catholic writers grappling with the problems plaguing modern society from a distinctly religious and moral perspective, Flannery O'Connor and [Graham Greene](#) are worth considering together. In one of her letters, quoted in *The Habit of Being*, O'Connor writes comparing her style and Greene's: "As between me and Greene there is a difference of fiction certainly and probably a difference of theological emphasis as well. If Greene created an old lady, she would be sour through and through and if you dropped her, she would break, but if you dropped my old lady, she'd bounce back at you, screaming 'Jesus loves me!'" (400.)

One could assess the veracity (and, more simply, the *meaning*) of this statement by comparing Greene's *Brighton Rock* to O'Connor's *Wise Blood*. Both novels have as their protagonist an impoverished, socially alienated, and religiously tormented young man -- [Pinkie Brown](#) in "Brighton Rock" and Hazel Motes in "Wise Blood" -- with an anxious relationship to sexual matters and a misogynistic orientation towards women. Each protagonist strives to reach some sense of stable identity and recognition. Each young man has a relationship with a young woman

that, far from conforming to romantic conventions, involves great pain and spiritual upset -- [Rose](#) feeds Pinkie's sense of evil, and Sabbath Lily goads Motes on in his strange quest of not being, and being, a preacher. The climactic scenes of both novels are also uncannily similar: Pinkie accidentally blinds himself with the vitriol he carries around as a last-resort weapon, and Hazel deliberately blinds himself with lime as an act of faith.

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